



MBTA FARE PROPOSAL: PUBLIC OUTREACH

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MEETING CALENDAR

For the most recent information on the following public meetings and others that may have been scheduled after TRANSREPORT went to press, go to www.bostonmpo.org or call (617) 973-7100. A photo ID is required to access most meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

January 25 (Wednesday)

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA. Conference Rooms 2 and 3. 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Open House and TIP-Building Workshop. MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150. 12:30 PM (afternoon session) and 6:00 PM (evening session)

January 30 (Monday)

MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. Conference Rooms 1 and 2. 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM

February 1 (Wednesday)

MBTA and MassDOT Board Meeting. Suite 3830. 1:00 PM

February 2 (Thursday)

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. Conference Rooms 2 and 3. 10:00 AM

February 8 (Wednesday)

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Freight Committee. Conference Room 4. 1:00 PM

Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Conference Room 4. 3:00 PM

February 9 (Thursday)

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. Conference Rooms 2 and 3. 10:00 AM

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MBTA Finance Discussions in High Gear with Fare Hikes and Service Cuts on the Horizon

Facing a projected budget shortfall of \$161 million in fiscal year 2013, the MBTA announced in January the necessity of raising fares on all transit modes and scaling back transit service in order to be able to submit a balanced budget, as required, to the state legislature in May.

The announcement put a spotlight on the financial situation under which the MBTA has been operating for years, with needs for operating and maintaining the transit system outpacing available funds. The topic

has been at the forefront of Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) discussions and study in recent months.

Impact of Fare Hikes and Service Cuts

Throughout the fall, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), which is the staff for the MPO, worked with the MBTA to analyze the impacts of two possible scenarios for meeting the MBTA's revenue targets. The scenarios under

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All Boston-area transit customers will pay higher fares this summer if proposed fare increases are implemented to address MBTA revenue needs.

New Schedule for MPO Planning

Municipal planners and other members of the public who have given up summer beach days to participate in the MPO's annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) development processes, which normally culminate in August, will be pleased to hear that the MPO has revised its schedule for the production of these two planning docu-

ments in order to complete its work in June, before the vacation season.



As a result, the development of the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2013–16 TIP, the document in which federal highway and transit funds are programmed for transportation projects to be implemented over the next four years, and the FFY 2013 UPWP, which describes transportation planning studies to be undertaken in the next fiscal

year, started earlier this year, in January.

The MPO held TIP-Building Workshops in Winchester and Canton earlier in January to familiarize municipal staff and members of the public with the TIP development process. An MPO Open House, which includes a TIP-Building workshop, is scheduled to be held at the State Transportation Building in Boston on January 25. (See the calendar for times and locations.)

The members of the Boston Region MPO: Massachusetts Department of Transportation, cities of Beverly, Boston, Everett, Newton, Somerville, and Woburn, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board, Massachusetts Port Authority, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, towns of Arlington, Bedford, Braintree, Framingham, Lexington, Medway, and Norwood

MBTA Financial Needs in Spotlight

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consideration would institute either a 43 percent increase in fares with service cuts to all modes, or a 35 percent increase with even more extensive service cuts.

Under both scenarios, ferry service would be eliminated and weekend service would cease on the Mattapan High-Speed Line, the E Branch of the Green Line, and commuter rail. There would also be no commuter rail service after 10 PM on weekdays.

Under the scenario with the higher fare hike, bus routes that fail a cost standard would be eliminated, while the scenario with the smaller fare hike would include a more drastic reduction in bus routes and the elimination of all private-carrier bus routes. The MBTA's paratransit service, THE RIDE, would continue to operate; however, premium rates would be applied for service to or from areas outside of

the service area that is mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

CTPS's analysis concluded that both scenarios would increase revenue for the MBTA, but that the benefit would be offset by decreases in transit ridership and poorer air quality if higher fares and less service push more people to travel by car. The changes would also have impacts on low-income populations that are transit dependent. The report, *Potential MBTA Fare Increase and Service Reductions in 2012: Impact Analysis*, is posted on the MBTA's website, www.mbta.com.

The MBTA has scheduled more than 20 public meetings in January, February, and early March to gather public input on the proposals. The MBTA Board of Directors will make a decision in April about changes to the fare structure and service. Changes will go into effect on July 1, 2012.

A Short-Term Solution

Any change in the fare structure or service that the MBTA Board approves this year will only address the MBTA's financial problem for the coming year, not for the long run, because of several factors: a funding structure that leaves the MBTA reliant on revenues from the state sales tax; the ongoing need to maintain the system in a state of good repair; and the MBTA's debt burden.

The MBTA's fiscal crisis has been documented in recent years, notably in the 2007 report by the Massachusetts Transportation Finance Commission, which estimated that the cost of maintaining the system over the next 20 years would exceed anticipated resources by \$15-19 billion, and the 2009 D'Alessandro report, an independent review of the MBTA that called attention to the MBTA's structural deficit and multi-billion-dollar backlog of state-of-good-repair projects.

The MBTA Advisory Board's 2009 report, *Born Broke*, and others referenced later in this article have also explained the MBTA's financial condition.

Capital Needs

At a December meeting of the MPO, Victor Rivas, Deputy Director of Capital Budget for the MBTA, gave an overview of the immediate financial challenges facing the MBTA due to the need for investments to maintain vehicle fleets and other assets—such as power

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February 16 (Thursday)

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. *Conference Rooms 2 and 3*. 10:00 AM

February 22 (Wednesday)

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA. *Conference Rooms 2 and 3*. 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

February 27 (Monday)

MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. *Conference Rooms 1 and 2*. 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM

March 1 (Thursday)

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. *Conference Room 4*. 10:00 AM

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

January 26 (Thursday)

MassDOT: Public Meeting on the Roxbury/Dorchester/Mattapan Transit Needs Study. *Dudley Library, 65 Warren Street, Roxbury*. 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Meetings sponsored by the Boston Region MPO are conducted in accessible locations, and materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the MPO at (617) 973-7100 (voice), (617) 973-8855 (fax), or (617) 973-7089 (TTY), or e-mail publicinformation@bostonmpo.org.

MBTA Fare Proposal: Public Outreach Schedule

The MBTA will accept public comments on the proposed fare increase and service cuts through **March 1**. Comments may be sent by any of the following means:

Mail: MBTA
Attn: Fare Proposal Committee
Ten Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116



E-mail: fareproposal@mbta.com

Phone: (617) 222-3200 **TTY:** (617) 222-5146

In person: Over 20 public meetings have been scheduled from January through early March. A list of meeting times and locations is available at www.mbta.com.

systems, bridges, and stations—at a time when federal funding for transportation is under pressure.

Projects that are designed to keep the system operating in a state of good repair are enumerated in the MBTA's five-year Capital Investment Program (CIP). In recent years, the MBTA capital program has received an average of \$300 million in new funding each year. However, the needs for the next capital

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program (FYs 2013-17) require an investment that will surpass \$1 billion, due in part to the need to replace Red and Orange Line vehicles that are more than 30 years old and have exceeded their expected useful life.

Mr. Rivas explained that deferring the replacement of vehicles comes with its own costs, as investments must

then be made to keep old vehicles running.

In addition to vehicle needs, the MBTA will need to address the system's aging bridges, which will require significant investment in the coming years. Bridge needs are expected to grow exponentially, according to Mr. Rivas, which will pose an immediate challenge to the

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Boston Region MPO Activities

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTION ITEMS

In December and early January, the MPO approved new work programs that will focus on improving the reliability of the transit system, updating transit ridership data, evaluating the effectiveness of recently implemented projects and programs, and mitigating the traffic impacts of upcoming construction. The specific work programs are summarized below:

- **Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership:** A study that will result in recommendations as to where on the transit system the reduction of delays would have the largest impact on ridership.
- **MBTA Transit Delay Study:** A modeling study that will result in a tool that MBTA planners can use to evaluate operating strategies to deal with vehicle delays.
- **MBTA Rapid Transit Replacement Service Study:** A study that will assist the MBTA in updating protocols governing the use of buses in lieu of rail service, both for scheduled repairs and unscheduled reasons.
- **MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts:** The collection of commuter rail ridership data that will be used to develop a complete weekday composite count of commuter rail ridership.
- **TIP Project Impacts Before-After Evaluation, FFY 2012:** A pilot project that will compare pre- and post-construction conditions at up to six locations of MPO-funded projects to determine if the projects resulted in improvements to traffic and transit flows, mobility for vehicles and pedestrians, and safety.
- **Analysis of JARC and New Freedom Projects:** A study of the effectiveness of projects and programs financed by two Federal Transit Administration formula grant programs in the Boston region.
- **Callahan Tunnel Construction Impact Study:** Travel modeling work to assist MassDOT in developing strategies to mitigate the potential traffic impacts that could result from upcoming construction work to repair the deck and walls of the Callahan Tunnel.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

The December Advisory Council meeting featured Stephanie Pollack, Associate Director of the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University. Dr. Pollack's presentation centered on public policy considerations in financing for the MBTA. (See the article on the MBTA finance discussions.)

In January, Richard Davey, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), addressed the Advisory Council on the topic of transportation reform. Pointing to innovative projects like the I-93 Fast 14 Bridge Replacements and the Accelerated Bridge Program, he discussed MassDOT's intent to make sure that reforms are tangible to customers. He stated that transparency is a cornerstone of how business

is conducted at MassDOT. He also discussed changes in management approaches at the agency designed to maximize revenues, reduce costs, and spur greater innovation.

At its February meeting, the Advisory Council is scheduled to host Dr. Chris Caplice, Executive Director of the Center for Transportation and Logistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Dr. Caplice's presentation will be on scenario planning.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

The AACT Executive Board has openings for eligible members. For eligibility requirements, please review the AACT bylaws on the MPO website, www.bostonmpo.org. If interested in serving on the board, please contact Janie Guion, the AACT Coordinator, at (617) 973-7507 (voice), (617) 973-8855 (fax), or (617) 973-7089 (TTY).

Public Urged to Participate in Transportation Finance Conversation

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MBTA if federal funding declines.

CIP projects are funded mainly by federal grants, MBTA revenue bonds, state funds, and the Department of Homeland Security. To pay for projects in the FY 2013–17 CIP, the MBTA will be counting on the federal government to contribute more than half (58 percent) of the needed funds.

However, anticipated reductions of up to 30 percent in funding from the Urban Formula Program has led the MBTA to plan for reductions in federal funding that could leave the Authority short by as much as \$425 million over the life of the FY 2013–17 CIP.

Debt Burden

Stephanie Pollack, Associate Director of the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University, addressed the topic of the MBTA's structural deficit at the

December meeting of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council, the Boston Region MPO's public involvement committee.

Dr. Pollack described the current situation, in which the MBTA has borrowed to the extent that its ability to pay off its debt undermines its ability to operate the system. The MBTA's debt burden—from obligations passed on to it when the legislature instituted Forward Funding in 2000, legal commitments associated with the Central Artery project, and other commitments—will cost the authority at least \$400 million per year in debt repayment through 2022, she reported.

She called attention to several documents that will help to inform the public discussion about the MBTA's financial situation: the 2011 primer, *Maxed Out*, released by Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA); and two reports released by the Dukakis Center at Northeastern University, *Reviving*

the U.S. Rail and Transit Industry: Investments and Job Creation, and *Maintaining Diversity in America's Transit Rich Neighborhoods*. The *Maxed Out* primer can be found at www.t4ma.org/ and the reports are posted at www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter.

Moving Forward: Transportation Reform

Addressing the Advisory Council in January, the Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), Richard A. Davey, encouraged public involvement as MassDOT continues to implement reform measures to address the MBTA's financial issues and improve the delivery of transportation services to customers.



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